United Nations S/PV.4899

Security Council

Fifty-ninth year

Provisional

4899th meeting

Friday, 23 January 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Muñoz	(Chile)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Baali
	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Benin	Mr. Adechi
	Brazil	Mr. Sardenberg
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Holliday

Agenda

Security Council mission

Progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa (S/2003/1147)

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04-21753 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council mission

Progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa (S/2003/1147)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Sierra Leone and the Syrian Arab Republic, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Kalomoh to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2003/1147, which contains the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Mr. Kalomoh: I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to provide an introduction of the Secretary-General's progress report on the recommendations of the Security Council's mission to West Africa (S/2003/1147).

The progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa, which is before the Council, points out certain measures taken or envisaged in implementing the Council's recommendations on Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The report provides an initial assessment of how to address cross-cutting issues identified by the mission in the subregion. My briefing will also take into account elements of some recent developments in the aforementioned countries, which the mission visited since the publication of the report.

As Council members will recall, the political process in Guinea-Bissau for the preparation of legislative elections is back on track after the junta-led Military Committee handed power to the transitional Government of national unity, made up of only civilian leaders. The report of the Secretary-General notes the declared commitment of the transitional Government to restore constitutional legality and to hold legislative elections on 28 March 2004, to be followed by presidential elections in 2005.

Undoubtedly, those positive developments — and one can only reiterate an earlier call by the Security Council to the international community to remain fully engaged with Guinea-Bissau — are, indeed, encouraging. Financial resources for the legislative elections are in place, and a number of Guinea-Bissau's partners have provided assistance to address some of the critical social and economic needs facing the country.

With respect to the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, about which the members of the Council heard a comprehensive briefing by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) last week, the report indicates that implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement continues to be hampered by the parties' unwillingness to abide fully by the spirit and the letter of the Agreement. But encouraging progress has been made, and due recognition must be given to that progress. The peace process was stalled from September to early December 2003 due to a stand-off

between the Government and the Forces nouvelles over the procedures used in the appointment of the Ministers of Defence and National Security. However, it is encouraging to note in early December 2003, the Ivorian parties recommitted themselves to the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, and the ministers of the Forces nouvelles have since returned to the Government and resumed their posts in the Government of National Reconciliation. The fact that the peace process is back on track clearly demonstrates the sustained commitment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the international community, including the recent DPKO-led assessment mission to Côte d'Ivoire to prepare recommendations on how the United Nations presence in the country could be reinforced and enhanced. To that end, the report welcomes the news that the Security Council is considering a full-fledged peacekeeping operation for an initial period of 12 months. That is still under consideration by the Council.

On Liberia, the report of the Secretary-General indicates that early and determined steps in the implementation of the peace process would augur well for Liberia and would also contribute to the consolidation of peace in neighbouring Sierra Leone and the entire subregion of West Africa. As members are aware, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is yet to attain its full troop strength, and the report calls upon those Member States that have promised troops to redeem their pledges as soon as possible. We are confident that in the shortest possible time — perhaps in the next month or two — UNMIL will have acquired a substantial troop strength in the country in order to begin the process of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration. That deployment would no doubt help enhance the security conditions in the country, thus opening up the country for humanitarian and other assistance to vulnerable populations. The report also expresses the hope that the international community will continue to demonstrate its full engagement in Liberia by creating the necessary conditions to ensure the success of the forthcoming donor conference on the reconstruction of Liberia, scheduled to take place here in New York on 5 and 6 February 2004.

On Sierra Leone, the report notes that progress is being made in consolidating the peace in the face of some remaining challenges. Those challenges include the resource constraints of the security forces. However, much remains to be done to ensure that the planned withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) takes into account the Government's ability to assume primary responsibility for national security. Recently, members of the Security Council approved the Secretary-General's recommendation contained in his twentieth report to the Security Council on UNAMSIL (S/2003/1201) to send an assessment mission to Sierra Leone in February 2004 concerning a residual presence of the United Nations and the nature and scope of that United Nations presence after the withdrawal of UNAMSIL from Sierra Leone.

Some recent developments contributing to the consolidation of the peace process include the official completion of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the successful ending of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the end of last year.

Let me briefly turn to the cross-border issues, which remain at the centre of the instability of the West African subregion. As a follow-up to the recommendation of the Security Council mission to the region, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa is in regular consultation with United Nations political, peacekeeping and development missions in the region in order to develop a holistic strategy to address the cross-border problems afflicting the subregion. In this regard, the Secretary-General will, in coming weeks, submit a report to the Security Council on cross-border and cross-cutting issues, with recommendations on how best to address them and minimize the recurrence of instability in the region.

In conclusion, by and large, one can conclude that appreciable progress continues to be made in implementing the recommendations of the Security Council mission. Having invested so much already in the subregion in terms of capital and resources, it is important that the Council remain engaged there, to build upon the progress being made in the afore-mentioned countries and to address the cross-cutting regional issues relating to peace and security and governance. I should mention that the mission of the Security Council to the subregion was highly welcomed both by Governments and by the countries visited and contributed greatly to the operations of the United Nations and to cooperation between the United Nations and the parties in the countries that the mission visited.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Kalomoh for introducing the report.

Before giving the floor to members of the Council, I would like to recall that, in accordance with the understanding reached in prior consultations, the manner in which we will be calling on speakers invited under rule 37 is the following: I shall not be individually calling speakers to take a seat at the table or to return to their seats at the side of the Council chamber. When a speaker is to make a statement, the conference officer will escort him or her to the table.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I am very grateful to Mr. Kalomoh for his introduction and to all those in the Secretariat who contributed to the Secretary-General's report (S/2003/1147).

Much has changed in West Africa since the Council's mission there last summer. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has deployed to Liberia, we are on the verge of approving a much-needed peacekeeping operation for Côte d'Ivoire and there is a new Government in Guinea-Bissau. All of this offers real hope that lasting peace can be created in the subregion. But it will require sustained commitment from the Council and the international community, backing up the efforts of the West Africans themselves. This imposes a particular obligation on us to support African solutions.

We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting so that we can take stock of the progress made and remind ourselves of how much more needs to be done. Naturally, in what I am now about to say, I associate myself with the views to be expressed later by Ambassador Ryan on behalf of the European Union.

We are gradually seeing the Council's emphasis on a regional approach being put into practice on the ground, and this seems to us evident in three main areas.

The first area is tackling cross-border problems more effectively. As mercenaries and small arms move easily across borders in West Africa, so conflict and chaos move with them, disrupting previously stable countries. We need regional approaches to such problems, such as countries of the region agreeing to take fighters back to their home countries during the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). The Secretary-General recommended in his report on small arms (S/2003/1217), that the Council pursue more vigorously broader measures, such as subregional arms embargoes, in cases like West Africa, where borders are no barrier to arms traffickers and mercenaries. We believe this should be considered alongside Mr. Ould-Abdallah's imminent report on tackling cross-border problems.

The second area is the more effective use of United Nations assets across the region. We were delighted that the Secretary-General appointed a Special Representative for West Africa. The Special Representative has since initiated valuable coordination meetings with other missions in the subregion. We also welcome Department of Peacekeeping Operations efforts to exploit the synergies between missions. For example, UNMIL officers received pre-deployment training from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), and UNAMSIL logistics were used to transport troops to their new base in Liberia. The United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) and UNMIL plan to set up a coordination mechanism along the Liberia-Côte d'Ivoire border. All of this makes not only for cost-effectiveness, but for far better results. So we encourage the Secretariat to do more of this, especially as UNAMSIL draws down and UNMIL builds up.

The third area is closer links with the key subregional organizations. We look forward to Mr. Ould-Abdallah's separate report on how we can strengthen cooperation with and support for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This is vital if we are to build lasting stability that endures after United Nations peacekeeping operations have left. Similarly, we should encourage the countries of the Mano River Union to revive their former good relations, starting with their summit planned for February.

If I may, I would like to turn to some specific issues raised by the mission. In Sierra Leone, a country now at peace thanks to the enormous resources invested there, that investment must not be wasted. We shall examine carefully the progress made against the benchmarks set by the Council for UNAMSIL's drawdown. If these benchmarks have not been fully met, we shall have to consider what kind of residual United Nations presence may be required after UNAMSIL's departure this December.

In Guinea-Bissau, the collaboration between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council

is one of the positive aspects of recent developments in Guinea-Bissau. It demonstrates that no organ of the United Nations has sole responsibility in many of these areas and that, the more we can cooperate together, the more effective we will be. Therefore, throughout the whole region, where poverty and lack of development have contributed to the causes of conflict, the Economic and Social Council has an important role to play.

In Liberia, the next challenges ahead for UNMIL are well known. As Mr. Kalomoh described it, we need early and determined progress. DDR will be the most important aspect of this. We welcome the appointment of a deputy to Special Representative Klein, who is also the resident coordinator on the ground. This double-hatting has worked well in Sierra Leone in ensuring that humanitarian, development and other peace-building issues are properly integrated into the peacekeeping operation from the start.

Lastly, in Côte d'Ivoire, thanks to the sterling work by the French forces, by ECOWAS and then by MINUCI, the situation is improving. But to make progress with implementing Linas-Marcoussis, it is not enough simply to maintain the status quo. A peacekeeping operation is much needed and should be speedily confirmed. It is not a simplistic matter of a balance between Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. It is necessary, if we are to do more than merely transfer problems from one country to its temporarily more vulnerable neighbour, to act coherently across the three countries.

Finally, may I say how much we value these broader debates on regional topics. They are an opportunity to hear the views of the States of the region, to compare our approach to different regions and to draw lessons in order to develop all the regional synergies that are available to us, and we hope to develop a model for United Nations interventions elsewhere.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. Ambassador, and your predecessor most particularly, since it was the United Kingdom that led the mission to West Africa.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, wish to thank Mr. Kalomoh for coming to introduce the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa.

The Ambassador of Ireland will shortly speak on behalf of the European Union and I fully endorse his statement. At this stage, I simply wish to make two comments. Our meeting today gives me the opportunity of making a dual observation.

First, I believe that West Africa is now at a turning point. Secondly, we must commit ourselves further to a regional approach in our activity.

As I said, West Africa is today at a turning point. I believe that we may note, first, that the situation in each of the countries of the region has evolved considerably for the better since the Security Council's mission in July. In Liberia, the political transition is under way and the new Government is working towards the recovery of the country. The deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which today has more than 9,000 troops — and I understand, on the basis of the information available, that the figure will soon reach 13,000 — is now changing the situation, as we had hoped it would, including through the gradual improvement of the security situation, the provision of humanitarian assistance, progress in the area of human rights and the prospect of disarming the armed groups.

In Sierra Leone, it seems to me that stability has gained ground since last July. It would be fair to say that the country is now on the right track.

It would appear that, in Guinea-Bissau, the Government has made praiseworthy efforts to promote national reconciliation and to undertake the necessary reforms, including in the revision of the Constitution and in good governance in general.

Finally, in Côte d'Ivoire, we must stress that the peace process has registered important progress since December. The ministers of the Forces nouvelles have returned to the Government, heavy weapons have been cantoned, the issue of the Prime Minister's mandate has been settled and the primary texts are being considered in accordance with the Linas-Marcoussis Argument. Discussions held in the Security Council in recent weeks have highlighted the momentum unleashed in Côte d'Ivoire, which must be maintained.

Having said that, while it may be at a turning point, West Africa has not solved all of its problems. We must be extremely vigilant and determined, because the difficulties remain considerable. I shall briefly address each of the four situations in turn in order to illustrate our view of those difficulties.

We believe that the reconstruction of Liberia is an immense task. It will require time, resolve and financial resources commensurate with the efforts to be made. In that regard, the international conference to be held on 5 and 6 February will be an important event. We know that the disarmament of the armed groups remains to be accomplished, which is why I spoke earlier of its "prospects". We know that some are already refusing to be disarmed and taking refuge in neighbouring countries, especially in Côte d'Ivoire, as noted by Ambassador Jones Parry earlier in referring to the links between the three countries and the need to take into account the disarmament situation in each. Indeed, we are witnessing the transfer of weapons taking place right now.

In Sierra Leone, the gradual withdrawal of the forces of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone will depend on the ability of the Sierra Leonean authorities to guarantee security and stability throughout the territory. As the report before us notes, stability in Sierra Leone continues to depend on the situation in Liberia.

Guinea-Bissau remains on the brink of bankruptcy. The support of the international community will be essential to consolidate peace in that country, which remains extremely fragile.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the key stages of the peace process that are at the heart of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement remain to be initiated. Côte d'Ivoire will be unable to forge ahead without the resolute commitment of the United Nations. The time has come to consolidate the political momentum to which I referred earlier. We have a collective responsibility towards Côte d'Ivoire, as we do to the other countries of the region. I hope that we will soon be able to adopt the draft resolution under discussion on transforming the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire into a peacekeeping force.

My second observation, which I am pleased to be in a position to make, is that a consensus is emerging in the Security Council on the need for a regional approach to our activities. This consensus emerged from — or was at least strengthened by — the mission led by Sir Jeremy Greenstock to the subregion last July. We welcome that consensus because, as I have already said, the difficulties to which I have referred cannot, for the most part, be settled other than on a region-wide basis. It seems to me that, in this respect, we are facing a challenge. We will await the report from our friend Mr. Ould-Abdallah, but I believe that we are facing a challenge. The consensus on a regional approach, which all statements made so far today have emphasized, will have to be translated into action. How can we do so?

It seems to me that there is, first, a need to support the considerable efforts being made by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has played an essential and decisive role in settling the crises of the region, including in Sierra Leone. We also note the role it played in Guinea-Bissau and, recently, in Liberia, where it spearheaded UNMIL, as well as in Côte d'Ivoire, where, working together with French forces and the United Nations, it is doing an outstanding job. As I have often noted, however, ECOWAS is reaching the limits of its material capacity, and the international community has a duty to strengthen its resources. I believe that an even more effective ECOWAS is the best way of ensuring the consolidation of peace in West Africa.

I believe that we must help the African people to implement their commitments. One example of this is the 1998 ECOWAS moratorium on small arms. For our part, we are prepared to consider any measures that might help to remove obstacles to its implementation; we look forward to the recommendations of the Secretary-General in that regard.

Finally, I believe that we must provide the necessary support for the United Nations Office for West Africa. That Office is a useful — indeed, indispensable — tool in helping us to anticipate developments in the countries of the region and to deal in a consistent manner with cross-border problems relating to mercenaries, refugees and child soldiers.

I would like to conclude by saying that the Security Council's agenda for 2003 included many items pertaining to West Africa; that will clearly also be the case in 2004, as we consolidate peace in Sierra Leone, confront the challenge of peacemaking and reconstruction in Liberia and consider the prospect of a strong United Nations presence in Côte d'Ivoire.

I am fully convinced that the Security Council missions to Central and West Africa were very useful, because they gave us a better understanding of the realities on the ground and enabled us to make some progress. I believe that, later in the year, when the various forces have been established — when those in Liberia

and in Côte d'Ivoire have been fully deployed — and the regional dimension has been fully explored, we could consider the timeliness of a further mission.

Mr. Adechi (Benin) (*spoke in French*): Our debate today is a further demonstration of the attention being accorded by the Council to the situation in Africa in general — and West Africa in particular, which remains one of its major concerns.

We took note of Mr. Tuliameni Kalomoh's introduction of the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa (S/2003/1147), for which we thank him.

We also welcome the initiative to enable Council members to gain a greater understanding of the facts on the ground and to learn about aspects that the report does not convey — not because it attempts to mask such facts, but simply because the written word is not capable of reflecting them. Here, I would like to emphasize how much those visits give rise to, and further reinforce, among the peoples of the region, a sense that the Council is taking responsibility for managing the crises that are within its purview. Indeed, how many people in Sassandra, on the outskirts of Monrovia or in what was not so long ago the hell of Kenema, have the slightest idea that the Security Council devotes more than half of its time to the threat to international peace and security represented by the spiral of violence and destruction that they face on a daily basis?

At a time when multilateralism is being questioned and thrown into doubt and the Council sometimes seems to be a relic of the past, such visits are beneficial to the United Nations. They place the Security Council in a better light and strengthen the Secretary-General's initiatives in a part of the world where solidarity is still a meaningful concept that forms the cornerstone of human security. We hope, therefore, that these visits will continue, and that the missions will, to the greatest extent possible, be more inclusive.

In deciding to send a mission to West Africa, the Council had a clear goal: to find ways and means to consolidate the peace process in the subregion with a view to preventing the escalation and regionalization of the conflicts. Clearly, some progress has been made, although the situation remains fragile.

We welcome the coordination initiatives being undertaken by Mr. Ould-Abdallah in the subregion, through the United Nations Office for West Africa. We take note with satisfaction of the Secretary-General's commitment to propose, in the near future, steps to implement his recommendations. But we should nonetheless underline the fact that West Africa is at a crossroads. We are focusing our comments today on cross-cutting questions relating to peace and security in the subregion, in particular the difficulties faced by the countries of the subregion as viewed by the subregion itself — difficulties that require coordinated Council action, as well as the coordination of the Council's activities with those of the Economic and Social Council.

Essentially, tension must be defused in hotspots and the cycle of violence must be slowed or stopped, despite the continued existence of all of the factors that originally led to this disastrous situation. Although we have made some progress, we have not eradicated malaria, which has now taken a back seat to HIV/AIDS as a result of massive population movements, serial rape and the dismantling of the health infrastructure, with one conflict leading to another and with one epidemiological or natural disaster after another. This is a matter of urgency.

African mythology is replete with references to crossroads, which are represented as very dangerous places — places where all paths come together from surrounding areas, where each person might meet up with an enemy, but also where a decision must be made as to which path to take. The enemies of West Africa are well known. They are multifaceted, because such enmities have historical, internal and external causes. I would like to refer to just a few of them.

At the historical level, I would like to note the short period of time that has been available for building the nation-State in the post-colonial period, as well as the reduction in strategic importance as a result of the end of the cold war.

Internally, there has been a lack of democracy and bad governance, which favour the survival of the regime at the expense of the survival of the population, and institutional security at the expense of human security, as well as political, economic and social exclusion; increased long-term human rights violations; the absence of justice; and the poor management of public affairs.

At the external level, the construction of the nation-State in West Africa has been halted because of the structural and economic reform that has been imposed upon it. The result is a weakening of the capacity of States to deal with the contradictions inherent in any society and a loss of initiative and of ownership by the State of its development policy.

Furthermore, the State will gradually lose its ability to ensure respect for law and order and to offer its citizens basic social services. As a result, we are witnessing the weakening, and sometimes the loss of the sense of belonging on the part of impoverished and marginalized communities. This is fertile ground for warlords to recruit soldiers, resulting in the exacerbation of differences and ethnic or religious rivalries in the context of competition for limited resources and for power, and of the illegal exploitation of resources.

The proliferation and illicit spread of small arms, as well as the recruitment and use of child soldiers, is contributing to the construction of that horrendous architecture, which the Security Council must act to dismantle. It must generate the necessary momentum to promote a process that will lead to lasting peace, through the consolidation of the truce we are witnessing today and of confidence and dialogue.

The dynamic of a lasting peace requires strengthening the capacity of ECOWAS to restore peace and stability in the subregion, so that it might be in a position to fulfil its initial mandate — to promote the development and economic integration of West Africa and to enable the subregion to make a positive contribution to the input that West Africa must provide to the building of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

The dynamic of a lasting peace also requires building alliances of peace and cooperation, including the cross-border coordination of non-State armed groups.

Let me say, in conclusion, that the restoration of peace requires the following conditions: internally, the determination of the parties to make peace and to restore mutual confidence and dialogue; and externally, military, financial, and humanitarian support. It is at this stage that the Council must act. Indeed, a truce, ceasefire or peace agreement is worth only as much as its effective implementation.

As this debate is taking place, we face an important challenge: to consolidate the dynamic for peace in Côte d'Ivoire by assisting, in an adequate fashion, at the logistical and financial level, in the process of disarmament and demobilization that is under way by deploying rapidly United Nations peacekeeping forces, with a view to restoring and strengthening confidence and to promoting the return of order and respect for the rule of law. The Council will thereby help to stabilize the subregion and to promote development in an environment of peace and security.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): First of all, I should like to thank Mr. Kalomoh for the introduction of the Secretary-General's report.

The Security Council mission to the West African subregion concluded that a regional approach was necessary in order effectively to address the continued existence of regional factors of instability. Without attempting to repeat the points that the representative of the European Union — Ambassador Ryan of Ireland — is going to make shortly, and which we fully support, I should like briefly to touch upon five points with regard to the regional approach which was dealt with in the Secretary-General's report, in chapter III, more or less.

First, a regional approach requires a multidimensional strategy. Poor governance; disrespect for human rights; a culture of impunity; the illegal exploitation of natural resources; poverty and unemployment, especially of young people; the spread of small arms; the use of child soldiers; and the use of mercenaries all are cross-border issues. They all are interrelated and cannot be treated in isolation from one another. Without a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the complex and diverse root causes of conflict as well as their equally complex symptoms, lasting peace in West Africa is difficult to envisage.

Secondly, a multidimensional strategy requires integrated and coordinated efforts. The Governments in the region, international organizations and mechanisms, the international donor community and other stakeholders must identify shared objectives and areas of cooperation and undertake a division of responsibilities. Only a coordinated approach can reduce duplication of efforts and help to use the limited resources available more efficiently.

Thirdly, cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) needs to be strengthened. We have said so before, and it is worth repeating: the positive role

ECOWAS continues to play for peace and security in West Africa cannot be overestimated. The mediation of ECOWAS, at the highest political level, prevented a major crisis after the military coup in Guinea-Bissau. ECOWAS peacekeepers have played a key role in the stabilization of Côte d'Ivoire and in Liberia.

ECOWAS, in our view, needs the international community's support to increase its capabilities with a view to fully enabling it to take the lead in conflict-prevention and mediation efforts in West Africa. The United Nations is certain to benefit from ECOWAS's intricate knowledge of the specific problems of the subregion.

In this respect, we look forward to the recommendations of the joint mission to ECOWAS headquarters of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the European Commission.

Fourthly, cooperation among the United Nations missions in West Africa must be further developed. The United Nations peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the United Nations Office in Guinea-Bissau and the Mission in Côte d'Ivoire should develop a coherent approach to regional and cross-border issues. The potential of logistical and other assistance should also be explored in order to benefit from the effects of synergy and to make the best use of limited peacekeeping resources. We welcome the steps taken so far, and we hope that further efforts will be made.

Fifthly, political dialogue in the Mano River Union peace process should be revitalized. We encourage the Mano River Union States to revitalize their cooperation. We welcome the first steps that have been taken, such as the visits undertaken by President Bryant to Guinea and to Sierra Leone. At the administrative level, the Mano River Union secretariat should be strengthened expeditiously in order to provide a framework for enhanced cooperation. The United Nations, as well as the donor community and other interested parties, that is, the European Union, should look into the possibility of accompanying and supporting this process.

The stabilization of the West African subregion requires the joint efforts of the United Nations system, the donor community and the States in the region. Let me stress at this juncture, however, that no efforts from third parties and no amount of resources poured into the region can substitute for the full and unequivocal commitment of the national Governments of the region to peace, development, respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all, Mr. President, to thank you for having convened this open debate on the follow-up to the report of the Security Council mission to West Africa.

I should like also to convey to the Secretary-General our deepest appreciation for his report on the implementation of the observations and recommendations of the mission, which apply, in many ways, to Central Africa, since there are so many striking similarities between the two subregions. I should like also to thank Mr. Kalomoh for his outstanding introduction of the report and for his comments.

I should like first to start by underlining that, from the point of view of methodology, the Security Council mission to West Africa introduced an important innovation when it included two essential elements in its field of inquiry: the assessment of lessons learned in respect of the consolidation of peace, particularly in Sierra Leone, and a regional approach to conflict prevention and the restoration and consolidation of peace.

This is unmistakably an important development in our approach to peacekeeping issues, and it is likely to open new avenues for the work of the Security Council and of the United Nations system in general. We welcome this invitation not only to reflect on issues but also to build on experience acquired in the field of peace-building, including in particular the regional dimension.

I shall therefore not dwell on specific situations, which are generally developing in a positive manner. Indeed, we are pleased to note that the concerns expressed by the mission and its recommendations are already beginning to be addressed. As we read the report of the Secretary-General before us (S/2003/1147) and other, more recent reports, we can gauge the significant progress achieved over six months in stabilizing the conflicts that are afflicting the Mano River subregion. Peace is taking root in Sierra Leone, and the prospects are promising in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau.

With regard to Côte d'Ivoire, I should like to take advantage of this opportunity to say how urgent it is for

the United Nations to strengthen its presence in that country with a view to assisting and more effectively supporting the peace process. My comments will address the regional approach, which I believe to be essential if we wish to effectively contain these hotbeds of the cyclical and shifting wars, particularly destructive and violent, that have afflicted the subregion for more than a decade.

The observations in the Secretary-General's report on cross-border issues confirm our conviction regarding the need to position our future efforts within the framework of subregional action strategies. In fact, experience has shown how the viability of peace processes conducted at the national level depends on the regional environment. The report's recommendations concerning those aspects reveal, paradoxically, that the international community has lacked not only the political will for a lasting settlement of what has been designated the regional Mano River war, but also a comprehensive, integrated and consistent action framework.

However, it seems to me that if the necessary political will exists, the international community possesses all the elements to define an action framework for prevention and to build peace in the subregion. There is a broad consensus on the need to support the peace processes under way in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone through action at the regional level. The factors that feed the instability in the subregion — the illicit trade in weapons, the use of mercenaries, the recruitment of child soldiers, the illicit exploitation of natural resources, the free movement of armed groups from one country to another and the exacerbation of ethnic or religious tensions — have been determined and identified. The report to be submitted on those issues by the Secretary-General in the coming days will, I am convinced, help us to refine our analysis and understanding of those phenomena and thus to elaborate a suitable and effective action strategy.

The allocation of responsibility among the United Nations and subregional organizations in the area of peacekeeping is increasingly well-defined, and cooperation — both at the conceptual level and with regard to operational implementation — is articulated and under control. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has become a credible and ready partner. Its proven capacities, not only in the field of preventive diplomacy, but also in that of restoring the peace — including in emergency situations — represent an asset that the international community must support and encourage. Yet we must note that the aid provided to ECOWAS thus far is not worthy of the sacrifices it is making on behalf of all. The interaction with the African Union — particularly through its Peace and Security Council — could create the essential synergy for concerted action aimed at peace and development throughout the continent. That could also be accomplished by supporting the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which is an original form of partnership for peace and development conceived by Africans and for Africans.

That is to say how important it is for the international community — particularly the Security Council — to conceive and set in motion a modus operandi for a subregional approach, which — I must again emphasize — is no longer an option, but a necessity. The essence of such an approach must rest on strengthening the cooperation and coordination among the bodies of the United Nations system. The joint missions of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and a closer association with the Bretton Woods institutions are relevant, because it is obvious that a lasting peace requires lasting development.

The consolidation of a restored peace depends fundamentally on successful economic and social reintegration. The eradication of phenomena such as mercenaries and child soldiers depends — as the Secretary-General rightly said — on our tackling the issue of youth unemployment. The international community invests considerable resources to restore and maintain the peace, but it balks at funding socio-economic projects, which are less costly yet essential in enabling peace and stability to take firm and lasting root in countries emerging from conflicts.

It goes without saying that the responsibility of the leaders of the subregion's countries in restoring lasting peace and stability is just as important. The international community must take advantage of its strong presence in the subregion and of the new political climate that is beginning to emerge in order to spur the leaders of the region's countries to revive political dialogue and to reactivate the Mano River Union so as to make it an instrument for cooperation and regional integration. Improvement of the relations among the region's countries is more than ever necessary.

I shall conclude by saying how important it is that the Security Council create a clear and action-oriented doctrine concerning the subregional approach. In this statement I have described several elements that might articulate such an approach. When the time comes, the members of the Council could consider entrusting the Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa with considering that issue and making proposals.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): My delegation is pleased that the Chilean presidency has included on our programme the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa (S/2003/1147). I also wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Tuliameni Kalomoh for introducing the report.

In 1998, in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, the Secretary-General said:

> "More than three decades after African countries gained their independence, there is a growing recognition among Africans themselves that the continent must look beyond its colonial past for the causes of current conflicts. Today more than ever, Africa must look at itself." (*S/1998/318, para. 12*)

Five years later, Africans have taken significant strides to mobilize their own strengths and resources to address their conflicts, especially and specifically through regional cooperation. Interlocutors in the region have been engaged in the formulation of home-grown solutions.

The regional approach has assumed greater significance in West Africa. Its regional group, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is now 29 years old. Despite its members' political and cultural divisions and economic disparities, it has established one of the world's first subregional security mechanisms, creating an indigenous system for managing its own conflicts. In cooperation with the United Nations, coordinated efforts have led to positive developments — just mentioned by the Assistant Secretary-General and by the representative of the United Kingdom — in Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone as well as to progress in the peace processes in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

However, cross-border issues remain daunting challenges that threaten the stability of the subregion. There is therefore a need to strengthen ECOWAS to enhance its effectiveness through robust and sustained technical, human and financial support from the international community.

The main organs of the United Nations, specifically the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and its agencies, could play key roles in extending assistance, especially in the areas just mentioned by France. Some progress has been made in these areas, and the Security Council, in coordination with ECOWAS, has to preserve those gains. The Security Council has identified the key areas in which the United Nations can play a role, such as facilitating peace negotiations, implementing peace agreements, establishing the rule of law, preparing the groundwork for the conduct of fair and transparent electoral processes, setting up transitional administrations, strengthening capabilities for the provision of security, addressing human rights violations, delivering humanitarian assistance and addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups such as women and children.

In that connection, we are prepared to endorse the proposal for an increase in the troop strength of the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) and its transformation into a United Nations peacekeeping mission. The Philippines has a contingent in Liberia, and we join the call for all Member States to redeem their pledges of troops to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) as soon as possible. We attach great importance to the success of the forthcoming international conference on the reconstruction of Liberia. We support the projected assessment mission to Sierra Leone to evaluate the progress made in accomplishing the benchmarks that should guide the drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

My delegation also awaits the recommendations of the joint United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)–United Nations Office for West Africa–European Commission mission, which will visit ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja to assess the capacity of ECOWAS and suggest ways to enhance its effectiveness.

We welcome the plan of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to West Africa to develop a strategy to address those issues that are at the core of

the instability in the subregion, and we look forward to his report on practical ways to address them.

Mr. Motoc (Romania): Romania associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the Irish Presidency of the European Union. In general, we highly appreciate the European Union's overall commitment and substantial contribution in boosting the peace and stabilization process in West Africa. I shall therefore make only some specific comments on the topic under consideration.

First, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for the initiative of convening this timely meeting, as well as for the decision to conduct separate debates on the reports on West Africa and Central Africa respectively, having in mind the specificities of each of the two regions.

We commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2003/1147). Romania can support the observations made by Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh, for which we are grateful.

The outcome of the consultations we held recently on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) complemented the overall positive assessment of the implementation of the main recommendations following the Security Council mission to West Africa. True, six months is too short a time frame to make progress on the wide array of problems facing peace, security and stability in a number of West African countries. It is, however, encouraging to see one of the countries most severely affected by conflict in the area, namely Liberia, entering a new course that responds to some of the mission's findings and conclusions. We look forward to a successful outcome of the reconstruction conference on Liberia, to take place on 5 and 6 February, as a sign of the enduring commitment of the international community to Liberia's future.

We also commend as noteworthy, in that respect, the emerging success story in Sierra Leone and continue to support the idea of the important linkage between establishing peace in Liberia and consolidating stability in Sierra Leone within the overall progress in the Mano River Union subregion. Côte d'Ivoire could follow on the same path if all the parties fully implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, with increased United Nations engagement and support through the timely deployment of a peacekeeping operation.

More importantly, the Security Council has taken up many of the recommendations falling within its area of responsibility in its consultations, debates, resolutions and presidential statements on Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire.

The Security Council mission to West Africa itself not only addressed issues specific to individual countries but also pursued the conditions of West Africa as a whole and the need for the international community and the entire family of United Nations institutions, funds, agencies and programmes to generate a new momentum of support, assistance and partnership with the West African subregion.

Some steps have been taken in this regard also. In that respect, we commend the regional meeting held in Freetown on 14 November 2003, bringing together the heads of the United Nations peacekeeping and political missions and force commanders in West Africa. It is expected that the next meeting, planned to be held next month in Dakar, will consolidate that new development. For its part, the Security Council should support the meeting further so that it can become a forum for addressing the most pressing issues affecting the subregion, in particular cross-border problems.

On the other hand, given the number and scope of recommendations made by the Security Council mission with regard to West Africa as a whole, there still remains a lot to be done. It is Romania's view, based on its experience in its own region — Central and South-Eastern Europe — that only by addressing the cross-cutting regional issues can a durable answer be found to the core of instability that continues to threaten and undermine not only peace in West Africa but also any hope of overcoming its pervasive underdevelopment in the foreseeable future.

There is indeed a particular pattern of instability and common challenges in this subregion: a sizable population composed mainly of youth that are heavily armed and capable of moving without restraint from one country to another, carrying with them over the porous borders not only weapons and the culture of violence but also instability and destruction. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the exploitation of and illegal trade in natural resources further compound the difficulties in a subregion generally faced with a deficit of good governance.

Given the complex and interrelated nature of the sources of instability in West Africa, an integrated

approach covering the whole region and addressing the challenges at their core is required. Consequently, we should be seeking ways to make such an approach bear effectively on the decision-making process of the Security Council.

Likewise, Romania supports the enhancement of the United Nations role in the region, and we believe that the United Nations Office for West Africa should be given the responsibility to ensure the regional coordination of all organizations involved, thus making their impact more significant. For instance, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium on light weapons should be considered in articulation with similar endeavours taken at the international level, increasing its chances of becoming operational.

We could perhaps think of an even more substantial role for this Office, going beyond coordination and asking it to provide ideas and suggestions for solutions to regional issues, in parallel with support for meaningful and constructive dialogue at the bilateral and subregional levels. In that regard, we look forward to the report of the Secretary-General on cross-border issues in West Africa, with a view to further analysing the practical ways the Council can address them.

In the same context, we welcome the European Union's consideration of a regional strategy for West Africa that will focus on conflict prevention and resolution, including the perspective of a special partnership with ECOWAS.

The ultimate goal of increased international support should be to help the countries and peoples of the region implement themselves confidence-building measures both at the political and economic levels. Nothing is more important than African ownership.

Finally, one of the important points underlined in the wrap-up discussion on the work of the Security Council for the month of May 2003 was that the findings and recommendations of Security Council missions should become a consistent and integral part of the Council's decision-making process. It is true that not all the recommendations fall within the purview of the Security Council, but the measure of implementation of the entire package of recommendations should be considered as one of the benchmarks by which to evaluate such missions as effective instruments for conflict prevention, management and resolution. The Security Council should continue to pursue a holistic approach in implementing recommendations from its missions on the ground. Or, to quote, if I may, an African saying, it is important to run, but it is also important to reach the finish line and to know when one has arrived at the final destination.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to recall that speakers may always circulate the longer written text of their statements and that making verbal statements more succinct greatly aids the work of the Security Council.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): Mr. President, my delegation is particularly grateful to you for convening this important meeting.

In West Africa, many States are suffering the consequences of long years of conflict and instability, an issue that has been demanding the Council's continued attention. Today, we have before us a comprehensive and progressive report by the Secretary-General (S/2003/1147) that provides proposals on ways of implementing the recommendations of the Security Council, following its mission to West Africa last June. We are grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for introducing the report and to Ambassador Jones Parry for his comments.

As seen in the report, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) has been carrying out successful multidimensional work and will continue to do so through the local elections in May and throughout the year. Careful consideration should be given to the drawdown of the mission, the pace of the drawdown depending on how efficiently security forces build up in the country. UNAMSIL is also helping consolidate Government control over the diamond-mining areas and formulating a national resource policy. This is a crucial element of a sustained peace. This year Brazil is chairing the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1132 (1997) concerning Sierra Leone, and we intend to find a way to reflect the emerging realities made possible by the peace process. The need for a remaining United Nations presence in Sierra Leone will have to be examined in due time by the Council.

In Liberia, the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation (DDRR) action plan has been completed for tens of thousands of combatants, many of them children, and the

deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in October 2003 has improved security in the country. Violations of human rights are being documented, and the implementation of a human rights declaration is expected. We welcome these developments and look forward to further United Nations action in that country.

In Côte d'Ivoire, by the time the report was issued, progress was being threatened by the stand-off between the Government and the Forces nouvelles. Fortunately, the most recent accomplishments in the political process are encouraging, as stated by Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh. The Council has the responsibility not to let the momentum be lost and to urgently approve the establishment of the full-fledged peacekeeping operation that is under its consideration.

Last but not least, the case of Guinea-Bissau is very close to our hearts and minds. Apart from Brazil's traditional ties with Africa, Guinea-Bissau is one of the eight members of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP). We fully agree with the Secretary General's assessment that:

> "it is essential that, as called for by the Security Council, the international community remain fully engaged with Guinea-Bissau, including by providing urgent financial and other support to help the authorities follow through on their commitments". (*S/2003/1147, para. 65*)

We welcome the positive steps taken recently by the new civilian authorities, in particular the President's announcement of the date of 28 March 2004 for parliamentary elections.

We take this opportunity to commend the work of the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau and the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, which is very effectively chaired by another CPLP member, Angola. These groups have proved to be very dynamic tools, designed to promote mobilization of the international community — including international financial institutions — and dialogue with national authorities within the United Nations framework. Guinea-Bissau is emerging as a remarkable example of cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in dealing with post-conflict situations, and my delegation supports the comments made by the delegations of the Philippines and Benin on the need for further efforts in that area of coordination as regards the region as a whole. We also believe that other countries of the region could benefit from this kind of coordinated and multidimensional approach.

The situations in West African countries are the subject of individual consideration by the Security Council. This meeting gives us an opportunity to assess the situation by means of a comprehensive regional approach. While it is clear that the Council must give individual and specific attention to each situation under review, it is also evident that a regional approach can contribute to the solution of problems that affect, in a similar way, all the countries of the region and that may require common solutions and concerted efforts.

As indicated in the report, there are a number of interrelated cross-border problems underlying conflict and instability in the subregion, such as those related to the use of child soldiers, the resort to mercenaries, the existence of flows of refugees, the repatriation of ex-combatants, the proliferation of small arms and the need to strengthen the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes. All countries in West Africa can benefit from a concerted effort to tackle their problems. We are looking forward to the upcoming recommendations — mentioned by the Secretary-General in the present report — on practical ways of addressing cross-border issues.

The revitalization of the Mano River Union is also a very positive step towards subregional stability, and we have seen how the early involvement of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was crucial to containing the expansion of humanitarian calamities in the region. Full cooperation among countries and cooperation between countries and the United Nations are essential in consolidating the progress made in every peace process undertaken, as well as in drawing up an effective strategy to deal with those cross-border issues; so too is cooperation among United Nations agencies and missions in the region. To that end, meetings are being held, and they reflect the usefulness of cooperation arrangements with the United Nations Office for West Africa, as stressed in the report.

We are pleased that the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries is also playing a part in the promotion of peace and stability in West Africa. Together with ECOWAS, the CPLP provided its good offices in Guinea-Bissau after the events of 14

September 2003 and has worked with the parties in order to ensure a peaceful and constructive solution to the political crisis. Creating conditions for the holding of parliamentary elections and for an orderly transitional period in the country is at the centre of our efforts at the present stage. We believe that much better conditions for economic and social development in Guinea-Bissau are now present there. We believe also that the time is coming for the international community to expand its commitments to that end.

Addressing the root causes of conflict is indeed a matter of utmost concern, without which no sustainable peace and stability can be achieved. My Government has consistently and constantly advocated the importance of Africa's own initiatives and ownership, as well as the importance of the partnership between Africa and the international community. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is an African-born initiative based on a profound understanding of the daily realities of the continent. We are very confident that this initiative will contribute to the creation of a virtuous circle of socio-political inclusion, development and peace in the whole of Africa. As one listens to Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, one hears encouraging comments regarding Africa. In his words, "winds of change" are blowing over the continent, as illustrated by several conflicts having been resolved or being on the right path to conciliation. We are, of course, stimulated by those views and are convinced that bilateral and international support is crucial.

During his recent visit to several African countries in November, President Lula da Silva stated that

> "developing countries should play a new role, more affirmative and result-oriented. Those that have the capacities can and should promote compassionate policies in favour of those nations most in need, exploring all possibilities of cooperation".

President Lula has also recalled the importance of cooperation among developing countries and has affirmed our willingness to foster partnerships in the areas of capacity-building and the development of technologies compatible with the specific needs of African countries. We are also assessing means to improve the access of African products to our market, in accordance with the rules of the World Trade Organization.

My country is convinced that there will be no real political stability or economic prosperity in the world during the twenty-first century if all countries cannot benefit from them. We should work with Africa to make this possible, not only by assisting countries to overcome their present difficulties, but also by providing political conditions for effective recovery and sustainable development. Brazil is ready to make its best efforts as a genuine contribution to the stability and development of the region.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation believes, first, that the added value of missions to the work of the Council largely depends on good follow-up to the recommendations made in the ensuing reports. We feel in particular that, in the course of such missions, when concrete undertakings have been made by the authorities of the countries visited, it is essential for the Council to follow the subsequent developments very closely in order to ensure that those commitments are reflected in action.

Secondly, as regards the countries visited by the Security Council mission to West Africa, we believe that there are now opportunities for progress in the stabilization of Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In Guinea-Bissau, a date has already been set for legislative elections and the provisional authorities, with the support of the international community, are taking steps to help the country emerge from the political and economic crisis.

In Liberia, the United Nations Mission is deploying throughout the country and has launched a public information campaign on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement, an indispensable cornerstone of the peace process.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the return of the Forces nouvelles to the Government of National Reconciliation and the future establishment and operation of a peacekeeping mission, which my country supports, are positive developments that should decisively propel the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, which is the only path to peace and reconciliation in that country.

In Sierra Leone, we note that progress has been made in stabilizing the country and we await the forthcoming recommendations of the Secretary-General on the final phases of the drawdown of the

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and the possibility of a residual United Nations presence.

In conclusion, with respect to the regional dimension, important progress has been made since the Security Council sent a mission to the area. We particularly support efforts at coordination among the peacekeeping operations in the subregion. We also await the publication of a Secretary-General's report on cross-border issues in West Africa, which will serve as a basis for the Council's consideration of measures that will allow us comprehensively to address the challenges in the region as a whole.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): West Africa is one of the most unstable regions in the world; hence, the heightened attention given to its problems by the Security Council. The Council's mission to the region in June 2003 sent a serious message to the parties to conflicts on the need to comply with their obligations to cease hostilities, to achieve political settlements, strictly to observe human rights and the norms of humanitarian law and to implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. It is important that the Security Council monitor the reception of those signals by the parties and the extent to which the requirements of the international community are being fulfilled by the participants in conflicts.

We have carefully considered the Secretary-General's progress report on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa and we generally agree with its conclusions and assessments. In the context of the settlement of specific crisis situations in the subregion, we believe it important to stress the following points.

The military coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau on 14 September last year reaffirmed the misgivings of the participants in the mission. Following the visit to Guinea-Bissau and an assessment of the situation on the ground, we felt this to be extremely realistic in the light of the irresponsible policies of the previous leadership of the country. Our recommendations with regard to Guinea-Bissau and the new circumstances retain their relevance. The key task of convening elections following an unconstitutional transfer of power is more important than ever. We welcome the desire of the new authorities in Guinea-Bissau to restore the constitutional order as soon as possible through the holding of parliamentary and presidential elections in accordance with democratic standards. In the context of that task and of addressing the most difficult social and economic situation it. Guinea-Bissau, there is an increasingly urgent need to provide that country with the necessary assistance of the international community, as the Security Council has regularly urged.

The recent positive changes in the settlement of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire have breathed new life into the peace process in that country and give us reason to hope that the stated objectives of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement may be achieved. We welcome the compliance with a number of the mission's important recommendations, including the appointment of ministers of defence and national security, the guarantee by the forces of the Economic Community of West African States for the safety of Ivorian political figures and the adoption of an amnesty law. We feel, however, that progress has not been very significant in carrying out the recommendations with regard to such key tasks as the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the disbanding of paramilitary formations and the extension of State authority throughout the national territory. In order to strengthen and further develop the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire, we need to intensify international cooperation. We believe that the Security Council in the near future will agree on and adopt a resolution approving the establishment of a comprehensive United Nations peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

The long-standing instability in Liberia can rightly be considered to be the most negative factor for peace and security throughout West Africa. The key to bringing peace to the subregion is a comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Liberian conflict. We welcome the progress achieved in the peace process in that country, the catalyst for which was the peacekeeping operation undertaken by the United Nations. We note that the basic recommendations of the Security Council mission with regard to Liberia either have already been carried out or are in the process of being implemented. However, our conscience is still burdened by the ongoing impunity for criminal activity, including the involvement of children in hostilities. In order to strengthen the positive dynamic in the Liberian settlement process, it is very important to complete, as early as possible, the full deployment of the peacekeeping mission in that country, in accordance with the terms set out by the Security Council.

On the whole, we are satisfied with the development of the peace process in Sierra Leone and the state of the implementation of the Security Council mission's recommendation there. Nevertheless, the Sierra Leonean authorities still have a great deal to do in the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in that country. The most important tasks for the leadership of Sierra Leone are the resolution of existing internal security problems, the enhancement of controls over natural resources, including diamonds, and the strengthening of the civil administration over the entire territory of the country.

The broad scope of the missions' recommendations deal with problems of a general nature for the States of West Africa — problems that have a direct effect on the course of conflicts and on the situation of the people of those countries: the use of mercenaries, the large number of armed groups, the cross-border spillover of conflict, the illicit trade in weapons, the recruitment of child soldiers and massive violations of human rights and the norms of humanitarian law. These problems should be discussed in detail at a separate Security Council meeting, after the issuance of the Secretary-General's report on cross-border problems in West Africa and his recommendations with regard to the practical steps to take in order to resolve them.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting to assess our mission to West Africa. I would also like to congratulate, and welcome the presence of, Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh, and to thank him for his report. This is an assessment tool, very important in measuring the feasibility of Security Council missions. It is a very important exercise by the Council.

A good number of positive changes have taken place in Liberia, in Côte d'Ivoire, in Sierra Leone and in Guinea-Bissau since we visited the West African region. Our presence in the region, as well as our recommendations, contributed significantly to those changes. This is a clear demonstration of how important the Council missions have been, and it is a good reason to continue the practice — although we need to improve the missions in order to render them even more effective.

The West African region as a whole has never been as close to peace as it is now. This is an opportunity that the countries of the region and the international community should therefore seize.

Despite the positive developments, each of the countries requires particular attention from the international community if it is to meet the challenges of the post-conflict period. In Côte d'Ivoire, a sustainable peace requires the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation as soon as possible, as requested by the Ivorian authorities and by ministers from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) during the Security Council mission just two months ago. Everything should be done to deploy a sufficient number of peacekeepers in a timely manner. The deployment of a sufficient number of peacekeepers is one of the main guarantees of a successful peace process. At this stage the expectations of the Ivorian people of the role of the United Nations are very high. The decision to be taken by the Council will therefore have a very significant impact on the ground.

In Guinea-Bissau, efforts made by the new authorities to restore legality need to be reinforced through the provision of support. Clear reference has already been made to this issue, in particular by my colleague the Ambassador of Brazil. As has been noted, Guinea-Bissau has become a good example of a common effort by the Security Council, ECOWAS, United Nations agencies, the United Nations Development Programme and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries. As has also been noted, this experience can be extended to Burundi as well as, I am sure, to countries in the West African region, such as Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

The authorities in Guinea-Bissau continue to lead the country towards normalcy. Parliamentary elections will take place as planned, on the agreed date, as also confirmed to the Council by President Rosa when he met with the Council.

With regard to Sierra Leone, we welcome the idea of an assessment of security conditions before the complete withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). In our opinion, the useful lessons learned from the case of Sierra Leone — as stated in the report — could be the subject of debate and analysis in a public Council meeting, with the participation of those who were directly involved in the work of UNAMSIL. Such a meeting could take place after the complete withdrawal of UNAMSIL.

Recommendations could be made on how to better take advantage of those lessons learned.

In Liberia, the response of the international community to the forthcoming international conference on the reconstruction of Liberia and the political will of the parties will be determining factors in reaching long-lasting peace in that country. It is important that the pledges made by the donors be followed by concrete and timely action. This could enhance the confidence of all stakeholders in the Liberia process.

The cross-border issue requires a collective response. We therefore welcome the forthcoming meeting of the defence and interior ministers of the region, to be organized in Dakar by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in cooperation with ECOWAS, to attract donor focus to support security sector reform. This initiative is an important contribution to the regional approach being developed by the United Nations missions in West Africa. AS my delegation has repeatedly stated, the countries of the region, ECOWAS and the African Union should be fully associated with this regional approach.

It is our hope that the report to be submitted to the Security Council by the Secretary-General on cross-border issues will give a clear indication of the role of the countries of the region in establishing such mechanisms. In this connection, I would like to welcome the suggestions made here this morning by my colleague the Ambassador of Algeria concerning participation by the Ad Hoc Working Group, which we share. We stand ready to participate fully, since this is an important peacekeeping and conflict-prevention exercise that the Council could undertake.

In dealing with the African crisis, we should be able to count on the support of regional bodies, such as the recently established Peace and Security Council of the African Union, to address adequately cross-border issues. The strengthening of the United Nations Office for West Africa, as proposed in the report, also deserves particular attention.

The West African region has created important mechanisms to address the problems affecting the region, among them a moratorium on small arms and light weapons. The main concern is to operationalize those mechanisms. It is our conviction that the region will be able to render the moratorium more effective and operational, and this can be done if adequate assistance is made available.

On the question of mercenaries, it is our opinion that a legal approach should be taken, at the national and regional levels, to end impunity for individuals involved in such activities, since this represents a real problem, particularly in West Africa.

Before concluding, let me state that full support for the proposals contained in the report is a clear way for the Council to be fully responsive to the crisis we are facing. The situation is clearly improving, yet I believe that more needs to be done in order to achieve the objectives that we have set out in the Council. I therefore believe that the meeting that you have convened this morning, Mr. President, represents a very important contribution towards that end.

Mr. Holliday (United States of America): I wish to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for his report. We welcome the Secretary-General's progress report and have read its recommendations with great interest. The report furthers the dialogue that the Council has pursued in recent months, and that we hope will continue, on the regional aspects of West Africa's challenges and the opportunities for regional cooperation.

A regional approach to conflicts in West Africa clearly makes sense, given the transnational nature of the challenges, the mobility of local populations and the number of United Nations operations, and the possible efficiencies that could be gained in the process. While this is part of an ongoing dialogue, I will comment on several aspects of the report.

First, we welcome the recommendations made by the Security Council mission on Liberia and would urge particular attention to the recommendation that the donor community respond to Liberia's continuing humanitarian crisis. As Council members know, the United States, the United Nations and the World Bank will host the donors' conference for Liberia in New York on February 5 and 6. Secretary Powell and Secretary-General Annan will address the conference, and we urge delegations to recommend that their Governments participate at the ministerial level and use the conference to pledge their assistance.

The report rightly identifies the serious work required in Sierra Leone before the scheduled drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) at year's end. We expect UNAMSIL to complete its drawdown as planned and to meet certain benchmarks. However, we do recognize that serious needs will persist, and we look forward to

Security Council deliberations on how those needs could be met post-UNAMSIL.

We also echo the report's call for donor assistance for the Special Court for Sierra Leone. That body plays an important role in the national reconciliation process and requires urgent financial support.

On Côte d'Ivoire, some of the comments in the report dated 5 December have been overtaken, in our view, by the more recent report of the Secretary-General recommending a United Nations peacekeeping operation. We are in the process of actively discussing and considering the recommendation and the French draft resolution authorizing a United Nations peacekeeping operation. We would echo the conclusions about the need for President Gbagbo, the Government and all parties to heed the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and take the steps necessary for the agreement to be implemented.

We enjoyed a discussion yesterday with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ambassadors at our Mission. It was very informative. ECOWAS is making a significant contribution to bringing about regional stability. While we understand the constraints that it is under, we believe that it is important for it to continue to develop its capabilities and sustainability. I note also, as my colleagues have, the creation of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the possible establishment of a peacekeeping capability there.

On regional and cross-border issues, given the presence of multiple United Nations operations and missions in the region facing transnational challenges and mobile populations, we see the potential for inter-peacekeeping operation support. We would be interested, however, in hearing more details about the Secretariat's views of the exact nature and scope of the support, and we look forward to discussing more concrete ideas.

We welcome the intention to submit recommendations on how to strengthen ECOWAS's moratorium on small arms and light weapons, and cooperation between the United Nations and ECOWAS to overcome the challenges to the moratorium.

Council discussions of small arms earlier in the week only highlight the need to address the proliferation of weapons in the region and the threat they pose to regional security. Again, we are interested in any concrete ideas on how the United Nations might support the ECOWAS ban.

Disarmament and demobilization are post-conflict requirements across the region, and we would welcome any comments on how disarming and demobilizing combatants might be incorporated into this regional approach. We also look forward to the Secretary-General's report on cross-border problems.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I would like to join other speakers in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for presenting the Secretary-General's progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa.

The Council's mission to West Africa took place during a particularly disturbing period. The peace process in Côte d'Ivoire was experiencing serious difficulties; Guinea-Bissau — still struggling to cope with the challenges of post-conflict peace-building — was mired in political uncertainties and socio-economic problems; the security situation in Liberia was deteriorating rapidly, with portents of a major humanitarian crisis, thus the Council mission could not visit that country; and Sierra Leone provided the only reference for hope and relative stability.

Many of the country-specific recommendations of the mission were therefore in relation to the respective situations existing at that time. All were based on problems that could be reasonably anticipated. These recommendations were therefore relevant in the subsequent months, which witnessed a considerable evolution of the situation in all the countries concerned.

During this period, the overall trend has been positive. The peace process in Côte d'Ivoire is getting back on track after an almost total breakdown. New proposals which could disrupt the process will, hopefully, not be pursued. Liberia has undergone a remarkable turnaround following the timely intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the subsequent deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Progress in Liberia is expected to reinforce peace and stability in Sierra Leone.

Guinea-Bissau has also regained relative stability, despite intervening setbacks. However, its economic problems, which remain largely unaddressed, still pose a potential threat to a delicate peace.

Other Council members have already addressed the specific country situations as well as some cross-cutting issues — such as the proliferation of arms; mercenaries; child soldiers; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); poverty; and unemployment — and the need for a regional approach. The Security Council mission's recommendations on those issues remain relevant and should be pursued. We look forward in particular to further work on those issues in the light of the relevant reports to be provided by the Secretary-General.

I should like to make a few points of a general and cross-cutting nature. First, sustainable peace and stability in West Africa can be achieved only if the underlying causes of conflict and instability are effectively addressed. Those causes involve, among other things, the exclusion of regional, ethnic or religious groups from participation in political and economic power-sharing.

Secondly, sanctions — and even DDR programmes — will not yield enduring results for peace so long as the incentives of many of the fighting militias — as well as regime elements — to persist in promoting instability are not removed. Proverbially, money is the mother of all evil. There is an obvious and well-established linkage between the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the fuelling of conflicts in the subregion. There is a need to unearth those who finance these wars by buying and trading the products of the illegal exploitation of the region's natural resources. The financial transactions involved in both the illicit trade in arms and the illegal trade in natural resources should be covered in any sanctions or monitoring regime. The UNITA sanctions offer a good model.

Thirdly, peace and security are inextricably linked to sustainable development. West African crises — like those in other regions — arise from the politics of scarcity and poverty. The terms "comprehensive, global and regional" are frequently mentioned with regard to our approach; but without a focus on development, no policy can be comprehensive. There is a need for a genuinely developmental approach to ease and resolve conflicts and to permit political accommodation among rivals. West African countries and peoples must be given the opportunity to develop and to make progress. Enforcement and peacekeeping measures should be accompanied by adequate international assistance. Guinea-Bissau is one illustration. In Sierra Leone, a huge international effort has stabilized security, but, without economic development, the process could well be reversed. Likewise, in Liberia, reconstruction and development will form a major element of the restoration of sustainable security and peace.

Fourthly, a comprehensive approach to West Africa and to each crisis situation is obviously essential. Recent developments — especially in Liberia — have offered the world community a good opportunity to adopt a holistic approach to the problems confronting the West African subregion. Peacekeeping is an important tool in the hands of the Council. Pakistan is proud to have played a major role in the success of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). We are also participating in the United Nations Mission in Liberia. We have gained experience and insight into the problems confronting the region. Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire require equal focus and harmonious effort to ensure stability in the entire region. A peacekeeping operation is required in Côte d'Ivoire. A cautious and balanced approach must be followed for the drawdown of UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone.

Fifthly, a regional approach will have to rely essentially on regional partnership. That is emerging in West Africa. We wish to place on record our appreciation to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has played a key role in addressing regional conflicts, both through its engagement at the highest political level and through the timely deployment of peacekeepers under difficult circumstances. Such cooperation needs to be further concretized. We hope that the United Nations will respond to the need for capacity-building in ECOWAS.

Finally, the United Nations itself needs to act coherently in West Africa, addressing diverse needs in containing West African crises and building peace and stability. It is imperative to achieve greater coordination and synergy among the endeavours of the three principal United Nations organs — the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council — in addressing the complex issues confronting the region. At the same time, active engagement by non-governmental organizations, other United Nations agencies and, in particular, international financial institutions is needed to bolster the entire effort. The idea of establishing composite committees to address such issues, suggested by Pakistan, may be one answer for building a

comprehensive and coherent approach to complex crises on the part of the United Nations and the rest of the international community.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his progress report on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa (S/2003/1147). In addition, I thank Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for his introduction of the report.

Since the Security Council mission's visit to six countries of West Africa at the end of June 2003, even though there have been ups and downs in the situation in a few isolated cases, the overall situation in the region has witnessed encouraging changes. We are pleased to note that, in Sierra Leone, the Government's efforts to build the capacity of its army and troops, to enhance its control over its diamond resources and to prepare for local governmental elections are well under way. The drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) is proceeding as planned.

We are pleased that, with the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Liberia is gradually emerging from the effects of a long-standing war and has embarked on the road to rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The political process in Guinea-Bissau has achieved good results. The transitional Government has pledged to hold legislative elections in March this year.

The peace process in Côte d'Ivoire, after suffering a number of setbacks, is experiencing a positive trend. The various parties have committed themselves to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, and the Forces nouvelles have declared a return to the Government of National Reconciliation. The Security Council is deliberating on the dispatch of a peacekeeping mission to that country; we await an early decision by the Council on that issue.

The Secretariat, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the parties concerned have achieved good results in their efforts to address cross-border issues — such as small arms, mercenaries and child soldiers — in a regional approach.

While fully acknowledging that progress, we should be aware of the vulnerable side of the overall situation in West Africa, which is due in particular to geopolitical and historical reasons. The region's countries are closely inter-linked, and turbulence in one country will often spread to neighbouring countries and even throughout the region. Therefore — as recommended in the Secretary-General's report — the international community, including the Security Council, should, in addressing West African issues, adhere to an integrated and holistic strategy and strive to resolve cross-border issues while vigorously helping both the countries concerned and the African Union, ECOWAS and other regional and subregional organizations to enhance their capacities for conflict prevention and resolution. Greater economic support and assistance provided by the international community to countries in the West African region will be of equal importance.

Over the past few months, the changes in the situation in West Africa — particularly the good progress achieved in Liberia — have fully demonstrated that the Security Council mission to the region was timely and necessary and that the mission's recommendations — presented on the basis of realities on the ground — are quite feasible. We hope that the Security Council will continue to follow up and monitor the implementation of the recommendations in order to ensure that this is comprehensive and thorough. We also await a report by the Secretary-General on cross-border issues.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Chile.

We are satisfied at progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Council mission to West Africa, and we commend the Secretary-General on his initiative to hold consultations on cross-border issues, because a regional approach is increasingly necessary.

In the case of Guinea-Bissau, the political process should lead to free elections this year. The Economic and Social Council has continued its work through its Ad Hoc Advisory Group based on an innovative approach — which we commend — in order to construct in the post-conflict phase.

The favourable developments in Côte d'Ivoire, we hope, will enable the establishment in the near future of a new United Nations peacekeeping mission with a robust mandate.

The peace process in Liberia has entered a phase that we hope will be irreversible, as some believe it is.

For that reason, we should accelerate the deployment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in the interior of the country.

In Sierra Leone, growing stability has made it possible to carry out the plan for the drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in accordance with the phases set out in resolution 1492 (2003) and to transfer gradually responsibilities for security, police and local armed forces. In the meantime, it is necessary for the international community to continue to provide financial support to UNAMSIL.

All in all, we are seeing significant progress, and we hope that that lasting peace and economic stability in West Africa will be one of the best contributions the United Nations can make.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

Before proceeding, I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Nigeria, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Ndekhedehe (Nigeria) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ireland, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia; the candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro; and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area Iceland and Norway align themselves with this statement.

The European Union expresses its appreciation to the Security Council for presenting an opportunity for the international community to discuss how we can work in concert to overcome the challenges faced by West Africa.

As this is the first time in 2004 the European Union has had the opportunity to speak on African issues here at the Security Council, it is appropriate we take this opportunity to emphasize the great importance we attach to our partnership with Africa and its people.

The European Union enjoys a rich and deep engagement with Africa, both directly and in partnership with the United Nations. Our commitment to Africa results from our belief that the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa constitutes one of the major challenges to the international community today. Our approach to this challenge is to forge ever stronger ties with Africa through mechanisms such as the Cotonou Agreement and the proposed African Peace Facility, which will assist the African Union and the regional organizations to enhance their capacity and allow Africans to take the lead in resolving conflicts on the continent.

A fundamental principle of the European Union's relationship with Africa has been to assess our engagement there on a continental, regional, subregional, national or local level, as called for by the issue at hand. Nowhere has the need for a subregional approach been more evident in recent years than in West Africa. With that in mind, the European Union, in this Chamber in May 2003, welcomed the Security Council's decision to send a mission to West Africa. The mission's report, its recommendations and the Secretary-General's insightful responses to those recommendations have shown that the mission was, as expected, an undertaking of the greatest importance. The European Union is convinced that the mission's recommendations on a comprehensive regional approach and their endorsement by the Secretary-General are not only welcome but, in fact, represent the only viable way we have to ensure success in West Africa.

West Africa has suffered years of violence, population displacement, human rights abuses of the most heinous kind and economic depression. The conflicts at the core of the suffering have been exacerbated by regional rivalries and insecurities that

at times appeared to be motivated more by individual greed than by any real security threat in the subregion.

Today, the situation in West Africa is considerably improved. In Sierra Leone, the international community is considering how the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) can disengage from the country while concurrently building Sierra Leone's national capacity in areas such as security and reconstruction. The Special Court for Sierra Leone is playing an important role in re-establishing the rule of law and promoting national reconciliation. In Liberia, the United Nations, week by week, is bringing security and hope to the people of that shattered nation, and the formerly warring parties are participating in an effort to rebuild a national capacity for governance. In Côte d'Ivoire, the parties to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement are making progress towards fully implementing the programme for national reconciliation, and the Council is considering the authorization of a new peacekeeping force to succeed operations in that country by the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) and the mission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI). In Guinea-Bissau, the initial steps by the transitional Government are encouraging.

While the European Union recognizes and welcomes the significant progress made in each of those countries, we continue to urge all parties to implement fully all the elements of the respective peace agreements. Furthermore, the European Union underscores the need for the international community to continue its support for West Africa. The upcoming donors conference for Liberia will be an important opportunity to demonstrate our support for the peace process and reconstruction there.

While recognizing the regional causes of conflict in West Africa, it would be wrong not also to recognize the regional contribution to their solution. That is most notably the case in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, where the assertive action by the Economic Community of West African States was critical to the restoration of peace. The European Union commends ECOWAS for its leadership and continuing engagement, and we are continuing to develop and strengthen our relationship with ECOWAS. The European Union believes that regional cooperation and dialogue will only strengthen the security of West Africa, and in that regard the European Union calls on all the leaders in the subregion to engage in meaningful and constructive dialogue at the bilateral and subregional levels.

The conflicts of West Africa and the circumstances of their genesis have resulted in common challenges across the subregion. As the international community addresses issues such as the reintegration of child soldiers, disarming and demobilizing irregular and sometimes mercenary forces that do not respect national borders, protecting women and children from sexual violence, facilitating the return and resettlement of displaced persons and refugees, tackling the culture of impunity, restoring the rule of law, overcoming environmental degradation and stemming the proliferation of small arms, we must take a regional approach.

With this in mind, the European Union welcomes the Secretary-General's initiative in requesting a report from his Special Representative for West Africa, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, on defining a holistic strategy to bring West Africa out of the nightmare of conflict and suffering in which it has been lost for far too long. The European Union is also actively considering a regional strategy for West Africa, which will focus on conflict prevention and resolution.

The European Union welcomes the increasing interaction between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in addressing the challenges of peace-building in countries emerging from conflict.

The European Union looks forward to strengthening our partnership with the United Nations in pursuit of our shared objectives for this region. In this regard, the European Union Presidency's Special Representative, Mr. Hans Dahlgren, and the Union as a whole stand ready to deepen our dialogue with the Secretary-General and his staff, with the United Nations operations in West Africa, with ECOWAS and the Mano River Union countries and with all the other countries of the region to ensure that our approaches are in concert, mutually reinforcing and ultimately successful.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, we thank you for convening this meeting in order to consider the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa

(S/2003/1147). Syria was privileged to have participated in that mission. We would like also to express our appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General Kalomoh for his introduction of the progress report, in which the Secretary-General outlines the steps taken or envisaged to implement the recommendations of the Security Council mission with respect to Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

My delegation is pleased to note the restoration of calm to Guinea-Bissau and the pledge by the transitional President and transitional Government to hold legislative elections on or before the time set in the Political Transitional Charter, in accordance with the recommendations of the National Elections Commission. We support the Secretary-General's call for the international community to participate in providing financial assistance to enable local authorities to fulfil their obligations.

With regard to Côte d'Ivoire, we agree with the Secretary-General that the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement must be implemented as expeditiously as possible by all parties, as recommended by the Council mission, as must the recommendations set out in paragraph 31 of the mission's report (S/2003/688). My delegation welcomes the steps taken by President Gbagbo, Prime Minister Diarra and Forces nouvelles in progressively implementing some of those recommendations. We share the Secretary-General's regret at the lack of substantive progress in the peace process for the reasons cited in the report, and we support the Secretary-General's call for recommitment to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. Once again, we pay tribute to the French force for the positive role it has played.

We are concerned at the Secretary-General's observations regarding Liberia, in terms of ceasefire violations and sporadic serious hostilities, and we hope that the work of the Joint Monitoring Committee will be successful. We also hope that the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation will be successful, and we commend the role played in Liberia by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission until it handed over its functions to the United Nations Mission. My delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his response to the Security Council mission's recommendation to appoint a senior representative in Liberia. He has appointed Mr. Jacques Paul Klein as his Special Representative for Liberia in order to coordinate the operations of the United Nations system in that country and to coordinate with other missions in West Africa, such as those in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.

My delegation welcomes the progress made so far in Sierra Leone, but we echo the call of the Secretary-General for further efforts to ensure that this progress continues until the scheduled drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, in order to enable the Government to shoulder its primary responsibilities.

We support the Secretary-General's suggestion that the United Nations missions in the region should develop a contingency plan for preventing cross-border movements of foreign combatants, a point which was underlined by the Council mission to the region. The cross-border movement of combatants is a key reason for instability in the region, and we support the Secretary-General's recommendations with regard to addressing that phenomenon.

Syria closely follows developments in Africa in general and in Central and West Africa in particular. We fully appreciate the efforts of the United Nations and the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General to bring closer together the views of all parties in the implementation of agreements forged with international participation by neighbouring countries, the African Union and ECOWAS member States. Here, I would like to commend Ghana, Guinea, South Africa and Nigeria for their key role in trying to resolve subregional crises.

In closing, we would like to stress that United Nations missions and peacekeeping operations in the region, such as those in Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Liberia, have a major role to play in restoring security, stability and national reconciliation in those countries. Also, support for indigenous regional solutions and concerted efforts to ensure stability in areas of conflict and to end the cross-border flow of arms and mercenaries is crucial. We also underline the need to support United Nations and ECOWAS measures to consolidate the moratorium on small arms and light weapons in the subregion and to monitor the cross-border flow of such weapons.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Pujalte (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to express my country's gratitude to Chile for having included this open meeting in the programme of work of the Security Council. This is a

debate that we had been hoping for since last November, to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations of the Council mission which visited West Africa in mid-2003.

The Council has maintained constant attention on the situation of insecurity and instability that prevails in the subregion because of the threat it represents to international peace and security. Mexico has insisted on the need to tackle the causes of African conflicts from a comprehensive perspective ranging from prevention to measures for peace-building. We have participated in Council decisions in support of peace processes, implementing programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants, combating the recruitment of mercenaries and child soldiers and preventing and eradicating trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which contravenes the arms embargoes imposed by the Council.

Mexico supports the Security Council in maintaining a regional approach to these problems, and we thus agree with what the Secretary-General has said about the need to adopt additional measures to confront the factors leading to destabilization, in particular along the borders between Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. In that respect, Mexico will continue promoting the implementation of a regional strategy, including the Mano River Union, for peace, security and attention to the humanitarian situation, with the assistance of United Nations agencies and regional and subregional organizations.

The lessons learned from the reintegration process in Sierra Leone must serve as guidelines for overcoming the obstacles that arise in reintegrating young Liberians into civil life. We hope that, at the donor conference for Liberia to be held next month, adequate financial resources will be channelled into reviving the country's economic and social development and into preventing a situation in which the only alternative open to those young people is to return to warfare under the orders of the highest bidder.

We also support the trend promoted by the Security Council throughout 2003 to strengthen machinery for coordination and cooperation among the offices of the United Nations on the ground. We believe, however, that there should be a balance between the mandates endorsed and the availability of human and financial resources. The prevailing situation in Guinea-Bissau is not radically unlike those in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, but the United Nations true capacity to assist the people of Guinea-Bissau is limited to the goodwill of the donor countries. We believe that the situation should be considered and redressed by the Council.

We eagerly await the report of the Secretary-General on cross-border issues, with recommendations for practical measures for making the optimal use of the comparative advantages of the United Nations and the subregional and regional organizations with influence in West Africa. We feel that it should include recommendations on confidence-building measures, in particular the revival of the Rabat process,' to bring together the leaders of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Finally, I wish to reiterate Mexico's position in favour of the establishment of a peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire in response to appeals from the Government of that country and from the Economic Community of West African States. We very much hope that the negotiations to be held among the members of the Council will give priority to the well-being, peace and security of the people of Côte d'Ivoire.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I promise that I shall keep within the five-minute time limit allotted to each speaker, even if that should mean stopping in the middle of my statement.

I wish to raise a number of issues in my comments on the progress report of the Secretary-General on the Security Council mission to West Africa.

First, increasing the capacities of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a cornerstone of the regional approach to peace and security in that region. There is no doubt that ECOWAS has proven in recent years to be a model for African capacities in consolidating and maintaining peace in Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, despite its limited logistical and material resources.

We fully agree with the assessment contained in the Secretary-General's report that we must find a formula for overcoming the obstacles to preventing and settling armed conflict and maintaining peace. In that regard, we look forward to the recommendations to be

submitted by the joint United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Office for West Africa/ European Commission mission on the structural and technical needs and financial requirements of peace-building and peacekeeping in West Africa.

I agree with the Secretary-General's report's assessment of the key role of the circulation of small arms and light weapons in fuelling conflict in West Africa. We hope in that respect that we will find a framework for cooperation and coordination between all the United Nations regional partners and arms producers and exporters so that agreement can be reached on effective steps to stem the spread of such weapons, in accordance with the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and on the moratorium adopted by ECOWAS in 1998.

The current trend of coordinating the activities of the United Nations peacekeeping Missions in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire and of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau deserves our encouragement.

The regional approach to consolidating peace and security in West Africa requires global action that transcends the borders of any one State, above all with respect to the circulation of small arms and light weapons; the return of displaced persons and refugees; the phenomenon of mercenaries; and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for former combatants. In that regard, the drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone is critical. It must be gradual and pegged to a careful evaluation and follow-up of the progress achieved in Liberia, given the interlinkage of the situations in the two countries.

Furthermore, in addressing issues of peace and security, we should emphasize the multidimensional and indivisible nature of peace. The security approach is only one of its important elements and we must therefore give due priority to the human, economic and social aspects of peace. Regional and international peacekeeping efforts in any given region of Africa should be supported by corresponding efforts to consolidate peace, in cooperation with the United Nations, the donor community and the international financial community, especially in the areas of reconstruction, rehabilitation and financial and technical support for economic and social development programmes. We cherish the hope that the forthcoming conference for the rebuilding of Liberia will serve as a model for the international community's peace-building activities.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): My delegation would like to thank you, Sir, and members of the Council for giving us another opportunity to contribute to the open discussions on three issues, all of which are of special and direct interest to Sierra Leone. Earlier in the week, it was the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, followed by the equally disturbing but complex problem of children in armed conflict. Today, the focus is on the progress report on the recommendations of the Council's mission to West Africa, including Sierra Leone.

Our participation today is also an indication of the importance that my delegation attaches to such visiting missions. Council members get to see first hand — albeit after armed conflicts have subsided — the situation on the ground. Each visiting mission enhances the ability of the Council to make pragmatic decisions on the peacekeeping and peacemaking processes in the respective theatres of conflict. This was the Council's second visit to Sierra Leone, a country which until recently hosted the largest number of United Nations peacekeeping forces.

The Security Council mission to West Africa came up with eight recommendations concerning Sierra Leone. The progress report on those recommendations should be considered in tandem with a subsequent report by the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), published exactly four weeks ago today.

I should like to speak about just two of those recommendations. The first relates to the linkage between the drawdown or withdrawal of UNAMSIL and the capacity of the Republic of Sierra Leone armed forces and the Sierra Leone police to assume their responsibilities for the security and safety of the country. The question is, what will happen as UNAMSIL phases out its operation, and what will happen when it leaves? The Security Council mission to West Africa recommended that the Government intensify its efforts to develop the capacity of the army and police to ensure security when UNAMSIL leaves, as projected by the end of 2004.

Before I go any further, let me say that the people of Sierra Leone never expected the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to stay in the country indefinitely. However, they were shocked and dismayed to see ECOMOG leave at a time when there was concern about an emerging security vacuum. The population dreaded the possibility — or the reality — of the premature removal of their security blanket. They remembered the marvellous job performed by ECOMOG, especially during those dark days when the rebels launched their ruthless killing campaign, ignominiously labelled "Operation no living thing".

In 1999, during the peace talks in Lomé, the rebels repeatedly ridiculed us. They said that we had no army. Today, the situation is different. Thanks to ECOMOG, UNAMSIL and its troop contributors, the International Military Advisory Training Team (IMATT) led by the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and others, we can take pride in the fact that we have a restructured, professional, disciplined and loyal armed force and police force willing and ready to play their part in ensuring the defence and the safety of the people of Sierra Leone.

The Secretary-General's report provides a detailed account of the various elements of the current security situation. We note, for instance, his statement to the effect that, since September 2002, when the drawdown was launched, UNAMSIL troops have withdrawn from a number of strategically important areas and handed them over to the Sierra Leone police. We share his conclusion that progress has been made in the gradual handover of responsibility for the national security of Sierra Leone to the Sierra Leone police and military.

Only those who know and experienced what really happened in Sierra Leone — for instance, the role of the "sobels" or soldiers-turned-rebels, and the targeting of police stations in acts of arson and murder — would appreciate the progress we have made in the security and safety sectors.

This brings me to the second recommendation of the Security Council mission to West Africa concerning Sierra Leone. It relates to another linkage. The mission suggests that the Security Council should recognize the importance of the linkage between establishing peace in neighbouring Liberia and consolidating stability in Sierra Leone and the Mano River Union subregion. Sierra Leone is fully aware of this linkage. Who could forget that the rebel war was launched and, to a large extent, directed from Liberia?

The Secretary-General himself recognizes this and refers to it in his progress report on the recommendations of the mission to West Africa. He mentions, for instance, the ongoing efforts to stabilize Liberia and their impact in the subregion, as well as the contribution of the joint UNAMSIL-Sierra Leone military forces operation in tightening control over the border areas. However, he correctly points out that those areas remain a significant security challenge. The Council should take particular note of this problem.

Trends towards peace and stability in Liberia augur well for the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone. However, we must have the capacity to deter any repetition of the 1991 rebel invasion across our eastern border.

At this stage we can say that the prospects for assuming full responsibility for our national security and safety when UNAMSIL leaves are good – perhaps very good. However, as the Secretary-General has observed, there are a number of outstanding problems that need urgent attention.

First and foremost is the need for additional resources to enhance the overall capacity of the army and the police to assume their responsibilities. It is not enough to train the police and military and deploy them to areas vacated by UNAMSIL without providing them with an infrastructure, such as police stations, military and police barracks. What is the use of boasting about a professional and loyal army when that army's mobility and communications system are severely restricted? The Secretary-General points to the lamentable state of the armed forces' vehicle fleet and the shortage of communication equipment. Here, we recall the so-called inability of UNAMSIL to defend itself when the rebels attacked in May 2000. UNAMSIL would not have completed or performed its functions well if it had not been fully equipped. We urge the Security Council to give this infrastructure constraint the priority consideration it deserves. This is at the core of the whole withdrawal plan.

We share the view of the Secretary-General that progress in strengthening the capacity of the army and the police to take over national security responsibilities from UNAMSIL constitutes a key security benchmark that should guide the drawdown and withdrawal of the operation. In this connection, we commend the Secretary-

General for his decision to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the benchmarks for the drawdown and withdrawal plan, as well as the progress that we Sierra Leoneans have made in consolidating peace and stability in the country.

We hope the Security Council will take due account of the Secretary-General's observations and recommendations to be derived from that assessment. We have no doubt that the Council will also take into consideration, and take due account of, the views of the Government of Sierra Leone in determining the future of UNAMSIL's operations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Ghana, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): Allow me, at the outset, to thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Security Council, for having convened this meeting to discuss the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa (S/2003/1147). That is a further indication of the Council's concern for West Africa.

Speaking on behalf of the chairmanship of the 15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and with due deference to the Council, I must, however, add that the rather short notice given for our participation in this meeting does not give a good indication of the improvements advocated by the wider United Nations membership in the working methods of this organ with a view to ensuring more effective participation in its deliberations. The paucity of speakers from West Africa and, indeed, from Africa as a whole, in this debate, should therefore not be misconstrued as a lack of interest by African countries in matters affecting their own region.

We wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report under discussion. As a general assessment, we concur the report's observation that although, overall, appreciable progress has been chalked up in some areas in the affected countries in West Africa, much more remains to be done in pursuit of peace, security and development in the region.

It is gratifying to note the considerable progress that has been achieved in Guinea-Bissau under the able leadership of the transitional President, Mr. Henrique Pereira Rosa — especially the transitional Government's declared commitment to restore legality and hold legislative elections by the deadline of the end of March 2004.

It is evident that Guinea-Bissau needs adequate resources to get back on its feet and back on track. As stated in the report, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group of the Economic and Social Council, in its report on a joint mission with the Security Council to Guinea-Bissau, stressed that holding legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau was a high priority and that international assistance was urgently needed in that regard. ECOWAS appreciates all the collaborative efforts that are being made by the international community to provide assistance to Guinea-Bissau to get it over the hump. The twenty-seventh ECOWAS Summit, held in Accra on 19 December 2003, took note of the positive engagement of the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations Development Programme in assisting the transitional Government to draw up a short-term economic plan. The heads of State or Government called on the European Union and all partners to help mobilize international donor assistance for Guinea-Bissau.

We further welcome the determined response with regard to the implementation of the Liberian peace process. ECOWAS is particularly encouraged by the timely transformation of its intervention force into a blue-helmeted peacekeeping force and by the recent moves to further extend the reach of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) into the troubled hinterland.

In that connection, we wish to endorse the recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's progress report, as we re-echo the call made by the twenty-seventh ECOWAS Summit for the accelerated deployment of the full authorized complement of UNMIL throughout the country so as to promote security and facilitate the successful implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) process.

On the particular issue of DDRR, I wish to evoke the image of young people who have known nothing but the trade of war. Without the concerted effort needed to redeem them, could the global community be unwittingly breeding tomorrow's international mercenaries and, I daresay, terrorists?

Evidently, Liberia — like the rest of the conflict-afflicted regions in West Africa — is not yet out of the woods and will continue to need international assistance and support for some time. I would therefore like to use this opportunity to further urge the

international community to generously support the peace process in Liberia by ensuring a successful outcome of the donor conference for Liberia, scheduled to be held on 5 and 6 February 2004 at United Nations Headquarters.

With regard to Sierra Leone, while we share the optimism generated by the progress being made in consolidating peace, we recognize the need for great discretion to ensure that the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) from the country continues to take into account the Government's ability to assume its primary responsibility for the nation's overall security, to enhance control over natural resources and to consolidate civil administration throughout the country. In that regard, ECOWAS commends the Secretary-General for his decision to dispatch an assessment mission to Sierra Leone to evaluate the progress made in implementing the benchmarks identified to inform the Mission's drawdown.

Sierra Leone will particularly need the assistance of the international community in providing additional resources to enable the country to address the twin problems of education and unemployment. As stated in the communiqué of the ECOWAS Summit, such assistance should focus on resuscitating the economy in order to create more jobs and business opportunities for adolescents and ex-combatants. As a noted figure once remarked, "Youth is the first victim of war and the first fruit of peace. It takes 20 years of peace to make a man; it takes only 20 seconds to destroy him". We must not shirk our duty to the leaders of tomorrow.

In our sister republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the major current preoccupation of ECOWAS is to ensure the restoration of peace and security. It is our conviction that that can be best and most expeditiously achieved if the Council heeds the calls by ECOWAS leaders and others for an increase in the troop strength of the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) and for its early transformation into a full-fledged United Nations peacekeeping mission that will include troops already serving with the ECOWAS Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOMICI).

I wish to recall that, when a ministerial delegation of the African Union's Peace and Security Council met with the Security Council last fall, the situation in Côte d'Ivoire was so precarious that there were some concerns about sending a United Nations force into that environment. Since then, intensified efforts have been made and continue to be made to implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and the Accra Agreement, and the situation has improved considerably. We are happy to inform the Council that, subsequent to the issuance of the Secretary-General's report (S/2003/1147) now under discussion, the standoff between the Government and the Forces nouvelles has given way to a new, healthy engagement between the parties with the return of the Forces nouvelles to the Government of National Reconciliation. It would be most regrettable if the Security Council, with its rich experience and varied knowledge in conflict prevention, management and resolution, were to allow itself to be lulled into a false sense of security and fail to take advantage of the momentum generated by recent positive developments in Côte d'Ivoire.

I wish to emphasize that, while some appreciable progress has been made in a number of significant areas, the situation is far from satisfactory. As the Secretary-General notes in his progress report, the territory of Côte d'Ivoire is effectively partitioned, with about 60 per cent of the national territory under the control of the Forces nouvelles. What is required at this stage is a strong presence of assurance to seize this moment of respite and constructive dialogue between the belligerents. Not to do so could lead to a relapse into conflict. The United Nations should provide credible security guarantees to all major actors and should interpose between the potential combatants.

Indeed, it is time for the Security Council to live up fully to its obligations by authorizing a full-fledged United Nations peacekeeping mission for Côte d'Ivoire when MINUCI's mandate expires on 4 February 2004. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire has agreed to host such a mission. The rebel group Forces nouvelles eagerly anticipates a strong United Nations presence in Côte d'Ivoire. ECOWAS — which, together with France, is currently shouldering the burden of maintaining peace in Côte d'Ivoire — has advocated a full-fledged United Nations peacekeeping mission in that country. The Secretary-General has identified the need for a strong United Nations peacekeeping presence in Côte d'Ivoire and has made specific proposals in that regard for the Council's consideration.

As regards the recommended size of 6,240 personnel, we trust that, as always, the Secretariat has arrived at that figure in a professional manner. Moreover, the mandate of the proposed force will be

completely different from that of MINUCI, which was more of a holding operation covering only a small part of the country. Comparisons are not always appropriate, but the Council may wish to note that Liberia — where the United Nations has approved a mission of 15,000 — is a country with a population of 3 million, while Côte d'Ivoire is far larger and has a population of about 16 million. Therefore, it is our considered view that there are cogent reasons underlying the figure proposed by the Secretariat with a view to ensuring that the United Nations mission is able to successfully implement a process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) and to ensure peace and stability as the country moves towards elections.

We share the view — stated clearly in the report — that, although encouraging steps have also been taken to address cross-cutting regional issues, several obstacles still stand in the way of efforts to stabilize the West African subregion and to promote good governance and development. We therefore welcome the continued efforts being made to implement the recommendations made by the Security Council mission, including exploring ways to increase cooperation between the international community and ECOWAS, helping to strengthen the United Nations Office for West Africa, mobilizing support for the reactivation of the Mano River Union, providing donor support for security sector reform, combating the use of mercenaries and child soldiers and protecting children and women from sexual violence and exploitation.

In that regard, I wish to emphasize that attention should be focused particularly on the problems related to the prevalence of the armed groups that move from one country to another in West Africa, the existence of a huge number of small arms and light weapons, the use of mercenaries and child soldiers, and youth unemployment. It may be pertinent to emphasize the reality of the linkage between the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts, on the one hand, and the proliferation of and trafficking in light weapons in West Africa, on the other. ECOWAS, through its moratorium on small arms and light weapons, has demonstrated its commitment to curbing that phenomenon. However, that will require the cooperation of its global partners in ways such as those I outlined earlier on the issue of comprehensive DDRR and action by the arms-exporting countries to exercise the highest degree of responsibility on transactions related to small arms and light weapons. ECOWAS fully subscribes to the Security Council's encouragement of international and regional cooperation in tracing the origin and transfer of such weapons in the fight to effectively curtail such arms trafficking. Given the regional dimensions of conflicts in West Africa and the related problem of youth unemployment, we are eagerly awaiting the submission by the United Nations Office for West Africa of the report expressly requested by the Council on the question of youth unemployment.

Finally, I wish to place on record the deep appreciation of ECOWAS to the United Nations, and to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his personal commitment to seeing the West African subregion emerge from the sad spectacle of civil strife that has plagued some of its countries for more than a decade. Our appreciation, of course, also goes to the Security Council for giving high priority to meeting its responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security in West Africa. As ECOWAS ministerial delegations have often stated in this forum, the region is always ready to cooperate and engage with the Council to promote peace, security and development in our region.

I apologize, Mr. President, if I have exceeded my time limit, but I was speaking on behalf of 15 countries.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Japan.

Mr. Haraguchi (Japan): Japan welcomes the recent positive developments towards the resolution of the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. Those developments owe much to the efforts of the international community and the concerned parties in those countries. I should also like to point out that, in West Africa, conflicts in one country are often affected by conflicts in another country. Because of that situation, it is very important that the countries in the region act in solidarity to try to solve conflicts with a sense of common regional ownership, so to speak.

In that connection, Japan highly appreciates the contributions made by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and believes that the international community should encourage such regional initiatives and support ECOWAS in order to enhance its capability to conduct peace activities. Japan provided assistance to the ECOWAS round-table meeting held in Accra in June 2003, and we should like

to continue to support the efforts made by ECOWAS. At the same time, I am informed that nearly 20,000 troops are currently deployed in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and that a United Nations Office is operating in Guinea-Bissau. Furthermore, the Secretary-General just released a report recommending the establishment of a peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

It goes without saying that the international community should support the efforts to resolve those conflicts. But, frankly speaking, it is necessary to recognize that there is a limit to resources that the United Nations can deploy for these purposes. Having said that, the Organization's resources for these purposes come not only from Council members, but also from non-members of the Council, and thus we, the Member States, must always give consideration to how we can underwrite operations.

Japan is automatically required to share almost 20 per cent of the budget of each peacekeeping operation established by the Security Council, without substantial participation in Council debates. We are naturally much interested in the magnitude of the financial requirements of each peacekeeping operation and wish to request the Council to seriously discuss how to achieve the objectives of maintaining peace and security in the most effective and efficient way. We also wish to emphasize how important it is for the Council to discuss a definitive exit strategy when it decides to establish any peacekeeping operation.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire is at a very critical stage, and it is important for the Security Council to make efforts to maintain the momentum it has generated in implementing the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement of July 2003. I understand that the members of the Council are currently discussing the possible establishment of a peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire, following the recommendation of the Secretary-General in his report of 6 January 2004 (S/2004/3). Japan considers it important that the concrete conditions mentioned in the report for the establishment of such an operation should be met. Furthermore, we are of the view that before the Council makes a decision, the Secretariat should explain, to non-members of the Council as well, why it considers appropriate the number of troops that has been proposed to fulfil the mandate of possible operations. I would also like to make the same request with respect to the number of civilian police personnel, which will be suggested later.

As for Liberia, Japan welcomes the ongoing effort to prepare for the international reconstruction conference on Liberia, in February 2004. Japan also welcomes the progress of the peace process, including the beginning of disarmament and demobilization, and the effort to constitute the national transitional Government of Liberia. We hope that Liberia will become a good example in West Africa of how to restore human security in a post-conflict area. On the other hand, Japan is concerned about the violent incidents that took place last December in the process of implementing the disarmament programme. To prevent the recurrence of such incidents, it is important that the soldiers to be disarmed understand the content and the procedure of the programme, through enhanced public information activities.

Japan believes, as mentioned earlier, that all peacekeeping operations should have clear exit strategies at their launching. In this connection, it is important that the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), be completed by the end of 2004, as planned in the related report of the Secretary-General. Japan, accordingly, has much interest in the recommendations of the Secretary-General, which may be submitted by March 2004, on the basis of the findings of an assessment mission concerning the withdrawal of UNAMSIL. There are ongoing efforts to strengthen the Sierra Leone army and the police and to establish the effective authority of the Government of Sierra Leone, for example in the area where diamond-mining activities are underway. Japan believes that these efforts will help achieve the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone. The international community and the Government of Sierra Leone need to promote such efforts further, in order to create the conditions in which UNAMSIL would be able to complete its mandate.

As mentioned at the outset, a conflict in a West African country often has regional dimensions. Therefore it is very important to deal with such issues as border controls, mercenaries, small arms and light weapons and refugees from a regional perspective. We hope that the recommendations of the Secretary-General on cross-border issues in West Africa will be submitted soon. I am sure that they will be quite useful in enabling the Council and the countries concerned, as well as regional organizations in West Africa, to address these issues more effectively.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. I am sure your comments will be duly taken into consideration.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Djangone-Bi (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation is grateful to you for organizing this interactive exchange on the report of the Secretary-General on progress achieved in West Africa in the implementation of the recommendations of the Security Council's mission to that area, of 5 December 2003, in document S/2003/1147. I would like to thank Mr. Kalomoh for the excellent presentation of the report of the Secretary-General.

With your permission, Sir, I would like to confine my statement primarily to the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. My delegation fully agrees with the statement made by the Ambassador of Ghana, who is Chairman of the Group of Permanent Representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Above and beyond a few informational errors, which in the final analysis are minor ones, the report of the Secretary-General can be considered, by and large, to be in accordance with the real situation on the ground, even though we should emphasize that considerable progress has been accomplished since the report appeared.

It should be pointed out that, in an address to the nation, the President of the Republic reiterated his commitment fully to implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and that the Ministers of the Force Nouvelle have regained their seats in the Government of National Reconciliation. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process has practically begun, in particular with the withdrawal of heavy and light weapons from the front line and their collection under the control of impartial forces in agreed upon areas.

In summary, everything would seem to point to the fact that the year 2004 will be a year of peace, even if peace has to be consolidated on a daily basis, until the general elections of 2005. Here, once again, I should like to express the gratitude of the Government and of the people of Côte d'Ivoire to the international community for their tireless efforts to bring a return to peace in West Africa, and especially in Côte d'Ivoire, for it must be emphasized that peace can be considered in the long term only with a subregional perspective. This is why my delegation welcomes the subregional approach for the problems considered in the third part of the Secretary-General's report, in particular the search for a regional solution to the problem of youth unemployment and the possibility of defining an overall framework for DDR at the regional level, to refer to only two examples.

At any rate, I would like to reaffirm here the determination of the Ivorian parties to achieve peace. The Ivorian Government thus hopes to be able to count on the Security Council, so as to make the peace process irreversible, by transforming the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) into a genuine peacekeeping operation.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to impart to you our concerns, by clarifying our point of view on a particularly sensitive issue. Indeed, since the beginning of this crisis imposed on the Ivorian people to this day, the issue of helicopters and combat aircrafts acquired by the national armed forces seem to give rise to concern in certain parts of the international community, which seems to have become obsessed with this, thinking that these conventional combat weapons are the source of all evils being experienced in Côte d'Ivoire today. Without going into detail, I should like to state the following.

First, it is important to bear in mind that, as a sovereign State, Côte d'Ivoire has the right to acquire any arms of its choice, on any market, in conformity with its interests, for national defence, with strict respect for all international instruments pertaining to general disarmament. It is important that the sovereignty of Côte d'Ivoire be respected.

Secondly, I would note that, once they have been disarmed, helicopters and so-called combat aircraft can also be used in civilian police missions for surveillance of the territory. But systematically grounding them would be detrimental to the work of the civilian and national police, which would have considerable effects on the overall security of Côte d'Ivoire.

Thirdly, it is important to observe that, because of the difficult situation they are in, the institutions of the Republic have not been the ones to initiate anything: they are merely victims and are engaged in the self-defence that is authorized by the Charter of the United Nations. Helicopters and combat aircraft have been used militarily only in response to individual attacks;

they will therefore stay the ground as long as these acts of aggression are halted. That will remain the case as long as great strides towards peace continue. The international community may rest assured of that, and it should take this dimension of the issue into account.

The people of Côte d'Ivoire fully understands the need for genuine reconciliation among its sons and daughters — who in the final analysis are the major losers in this war.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker is the representative of Nigeria, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ndekhedehe (Nigeria): May I begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January 2004. We also thank you for organizing this debate. In the same vein, I would like to congratulate your predecessor on the able manner in which he conducted the affairs of the Council in the month of December 2003. At the same time, however, my delegation regrets the fact that we did not have sufficient time to study the report (S/2003/1147), given the importance of the entire subject matter and of the Security Council mission to the West African subregion.

We further wish to congratulate Algeria, Benin, Brazil, the Philippines and Romania on their election as non-permanent members of the Security Council. We look forward, as always, to working closely with all members.

On behalf of my delegation, I have to compliment the Security Council for its continued engagement with the situation in West Africa. We recall with appreciation the various efforts of the Council, which culminated in the establishment of the United Nations Office for West Africa about two years ago.

My delegation warmly welcomes the presentation of the progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa. The report highlights the steps taken in the implementation of the recommendations of the Security Council mission with respect to Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The report adequately addresses the concerns of my delegation by setting out practical ways of addressing cross-border issues identified by the Council mission.

On the situation in Guinea-Bissau, we note that, following the Council's visit to the country last year and the consultations held, also last year, between the Council and the new leadership of Guinea-Bissau, the Security Council continues to monitor developments in that country. We have thus received some good information on the progress being made in the electoral process and on the possible provision of financial and technical assistance by some donors. Given the serious economic decline in Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria will urge the Council to come up with a robust, comprehensive economic rescue package for that country. We believe that this could be achieved with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

On the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, we recall that the Council graciously held consultations with a ministerial delegation from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the last quarter of 2003. The establishment of a United Nations special political mission in Côte d'Ivoire has significantly contributed to the stabilization of the otherwise volatile political situation in that country. Impressed with the efforts of the Security Council, the ECOWAS delegation specifically requested the Council to establish a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Côte d'Ivoire. I therefore take this opportunity to urge the Council to urgently finalize the necessary arrangements and to adopt a draft resolution that would effectively establish a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

Nigeria commends the United Nations for facilitating the various peace processes that eventually led to the cessation of hostilities in Liberia. We note the political support of the United Nations for the ECOWAS rapid response operation which effectively secured Monrovia before the deployment of United Nations personnel. We commend the early establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation in Liberia. With the ceasefire now in effect and the interim Government in place, the security situation is sufficiently stable for the resumption of humanitarian operations. The disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation programme has been completed for 38,000 combatants, including some child soldiers and 1,000 female combatants. A National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation has also been established under the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia and the Special

Representative of the Secretary-General for that country. Nigeria commends their efforts and achievements, and would urge continued strong United Nations engagement in Liberia so that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated.

On the situation in Sierra Leone, we note with satisfaction the consolidation of peace in that country with the active support of the United Nations. However, Nigeria would continue to urge that extreme caution be applied in the implementation of the drawdown of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone in order not to negate the gains made in terms of stability.

In conclusion, Nigeria expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to the Security Council and to the entire United Nations system for their assistance and efforts in injecting some peace and stability into the West Africa subregion.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.